

Help

We are always trying to make it easier for you to find, get, and use the geographic information contained in the National Atlas. And we hope that you will spend a little time exploring its maps, articles, and services.

But we understand that sometimes you might need a little help finding your way around nationalatlas.gov™. That's the purpose of this article. Here we explain how to navigate the site and how to search the National Atlas. We describe our graphical user interface so that you know what happens when you click a link or press a button. And we provide instructions for locating specific information and products using keywords and indices.

The National Atlas Map Maker has its own documentation and is discussed [here](#). You may also learn how to contact us [here](#).

Help Topics

- ↓ [Page Header](#)
- ↓ [National Atlas Logo](#)
- ↓ [Search](#)
- ↓ [Chapters](#)
- ↓ [MapMaker](#)
- ↓ [Browsing by Products](#)
- ↓ [Mapping Professionals](#)
- ↓ [Rest of the Header](#)

[Help PDF](#)
[FAQ](#)
[Data Download Help](#)
[Map Maker Help](#)

Introducing the Page Header

Most pages found in nationalatlas.gov™ have a header at the page top. This is the header:



The darkest bar of the header includes links to our most popular products and services. There is a separate link here for those professionals who have already invested in their own mapping software. Just above this bar, is another with a light blue background that contains links to individual chapters of the National Atlas. Between this bar and the search box found in the upper right-hand position of the header, are links to some of our support pages, including this article that you're reading.

Please note that the Map Maker does not use these headers and any windows that pop open to present information may not include them either. But you will find them on most National Atlas pages.

We put them there to help you find your way around the Atlas. We designed the headers to serve as organized, persistent, and consistent links to the parts of the National Atlas that you're likely to use most frequently. They are also intended to let

you know where you are within the nationalatlas.govTM. We try to make your navigation choices and locations clear, consistent, and easy to understand. If we've failed or if you have suggestions for improving the interface or any other part of nationalatlas.govTM, please [contact us](#).

[back to top](#) 

Navigating the National Atlas Using the Page Header

You're Still in Nationalatlas.govTM If You See Our Logo



The top of nearly all pages in the National Atlas of the United States® bears the red, white, and blue atlas logo.

Small pop-up windows may not include our logo. Clicking the nationalatlas.govTM logo will always return you to the home page of the National Atlas. Often, the Atlas will link to valuable information that resides somewhere else on the World Wide Web (WWW). Unlike other sites, we don't post any 'exit signs.' We don't tell you when you're leaving the National Atlas. It will likely be obvious to you when you've been referred to another Web site, but you'll know for certain if the nationalatlas.govTM logo is not at the top of the page.

Search nationalatlas.govTM

You can search for the occurrence of any word or phrase that appears within the National Atlas. To do so, type anything into the white box that contains the phrase [Type search words for nationalatlas.gov](#) and then press the pill-shaped Go button to its right. A new page appears that lists links to any occurrences in the National Atlas of your search word or phrase. One easy convention to remember is to enclose your phrases in quotation marks. For example, if you enter the phrase surface water and click the Go button, you will retrieve at least 27 links in the Atlas to the word surface, at least 44 to the word water, and at least another 6 to the phrase surface water. Searching for "surface water" (using quotation marks) will list only those entries that include the whole phrase and may reduce the number of results that aren't useful to you. We use [Ultraseek](#) provided by the [U.S. Geological Survey](#) and direct you here for more [detailed information about using this search engine](#) to find information within the National Atlas.

 

[back to top](#) 

Browsing by Chapters



One way to browse through the maps and stories in the National Atlas is by clicking any chapter links found on the light, blue bar, from Agriculture to Water. Here we use a traditional approach to atlas publishing by organizing our products and services by broad subject categories. For example, click on the Geology chapter link. You are taken to a brief introduction to this study of the Earth and relevant topics covered by National Atlas maps. Note that on the right side of this page there is a box that contains links to National Atlas products and services associated with the Geology chapter. You may click on any of these links to explore the Atlas.

Start Making Maps

Some folks just want to start making, querying, and printing their own maps. Click



Map Maker Samples
Geologic Map
Seismic Hazards
Shaded Relief
More . . .
Map Layers
Geologic Map
Seismic Hazards
Shaded Relief
More . . .
Wall Maps

the big yellow Map Maker button to fire up our award-winning software for making your own maps. The Map Maker will load in a new window. It has its own documentation, which you can find [here](#).

[back to top](#) 

Browsing by Products



The dark blue bar on our page header includes links to pages that introduce our maps, data, and services. Once you've loaded one of our products pages you'll find internal links at the top that you can use for exploring the page. The links on the dark blue bar for Map Layers and Articles load pages that include tables that list what's available. The links to Printable Maps, Wall Maps, and Dynamic Maps load pages that describe what's available in detail. You may [click here for a quick introduction to National Atlas products and services](#).

Products and Services for Mapping Professionals



This link is intended for those who have already invested in mapping, geographic information, image processing, and/or scientific visualization systems software. It loads a page that describes the availability of National Atlas raw data, raw data documentation, and Web mapping services.

[back to top](#) 

The Rest of the Header

There are seven links in gray text on the right side of the header just above the light blue bar. These tell you a little about the National Atlas and the organizations that are engaged in its publication. There is a link to this Help page you're reading now. There are also links that take you to our online surveys, to information about how to contact the Atlas staff, and to our answers to questions that are frequently asked. There are also links to a products overview page and a [nationalatlas.gov™](#) site map.



Click the About link to read more about the purpose and history of The National Atlas of the United States of America®. When you want to reach us, click the Contact Us link. The staff of the National Atlas will respond as necessary just as quickly as we can. This page includes our electronic mail address and any current voluntary surveys you may complete to help us to improve our products and services. There are more than 20 organizations working to bring you [nationalatlas.gov™](#). Click the Partners link to learn more about all of them. The Site Map link loads a page that provides a visual overview of National Atlas Web site. From this page, you can move quickly to another part of the Atlas. The FAQ - or Frequently Answered Questions link - displays a page with answers to questions we receive again and again.

If you look beneath the dark blue bar at the bottom of the header, on the right-hand side, you'll also see something we've added to help you keep track of where you are in the National Atlas. It's a little line of site location text that tells you the functional name of your current page and any links that may have taken you there. Some Web designers call these bread crumbs, because you can follow their trail backwards to find your way home! For example

[Home](#) > [Geology](#) > Geomagnetism

indicates that you are reading the article on geomagnetism within the chapter devoted to Geology. You can return to the chapter introduction by clicking on the

word Geology or you can go straight to the Home page by clicking the word Home.

[back to top](#) 

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